

STATE SENATOR
BRUCE PATTERSON
IN THE LOOP ★

Serving the 7th District | P.O. Box 30036 | Lansing, MI 48909
PHONE: (517) 373-0793 | TOLL FREE: 1-866-262-7307 | FAX: (517) 373-9228
WEB: www.senate.michigan.gov/patterson | E-MAIL: senbpatterson@senate.michigan.gov

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Senate completes “First Steps for ‘06”

The state Senate this week completed work on the "First Steps for '06" - the initial four agenda items announced by House and Senate Republican leaders just over two weeks ago.

The legislation headed for the governor's desk includes:

- *A tax reduction for small businesses* by lowering the alternative rate they pay on the Single Business Tax - a modest slice of the budget could cut taxes in half for more than 30,000 Michigan job providers, enabling them to make new hires and improvements.
- A bill which places *\$116 million of state revenue left over* from 2005 in the state's Budget Stabilization Fund - money that can only be spent once and, therefore, should be tucked away until all priorities are examined and the money can be spent wisely.
- *A prohibition of onerous ergonomic standards* for businesses - unreasonable standards above and beyond what the federal government and other states are doing, thereby making Michigan a less-attractive state in which to do business.
- *Assistance to job providers* in dealing with the state Treasury bureaucracy - a bureaucracy business owners often complain about because of its size and inefficiency.

Sen. Patterson introduces anti-bullying bill

On Wednesday, Jan. 25, Sen. Patterson introduced SB 1012, which will direct school districts to set appropriate boundaries against bullying, establish procedures for investigation of reports, and deal with offenders. "This bill will allow local school boards to determine local standards that reflect parents' concerns, and to remedy incidents not conducive to student safety. When children do not feel safe, their ability to learn suffers."

In 2004, Sen. Patterson was instrumental in passing "Garret's Law", named for Garret Drogosch of Northville, who suffered in a hazing incident. Public Act 111 of 2004 is considered one of the best laws of its kind in the country.

New wellness initiatives unveiled

A series of new wellness initiatives was unveiled in the Senate this week that will encourage healthy behavior and subsequently reduce health care costs in Michigan to help revive our economy.

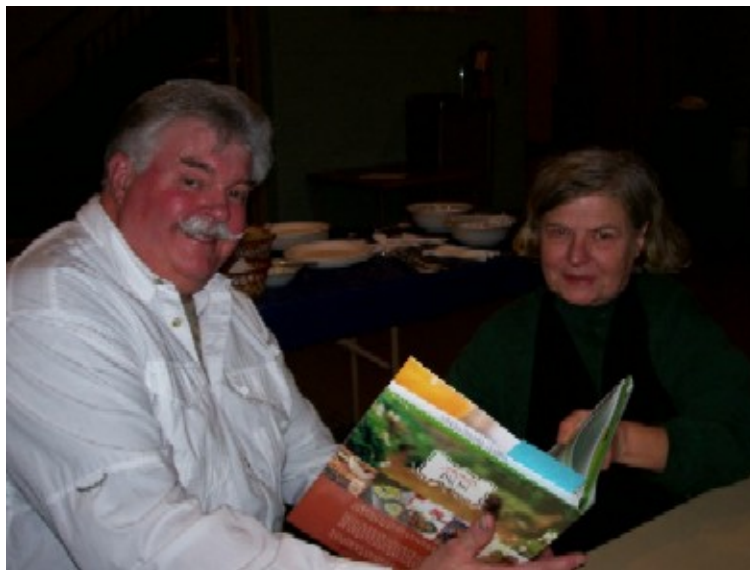
“Phase Three – Healthy Living Initiatives,” is a continuation of a Senate plan to bring Michigan in line with other states in terms of overall health and wellness. Michigan is one of the unhealthier states because its citizens are less active and partake in more unhealthy behaviors than residents in other states. These unhealthy behaviors result in the increased health care costs that are crippling our economy.

The initiatives will:

- Establish personal responsibility agreements for adult Medicaid recipients;
- Revise the Medicaid verification process;
- Require physical education in elementary schools;
- Allow pocketbook incentives for Medicaid recipients who make healthy choices;
- Provide state contracting preferences for businesses that offer employee wellness programs;
- Add use of tobacco products as a criterion for determining health insurance premiums; and
- Create a Michigan Outdoor Fitness Award.

Patterson with Belleville Rotary & Huron Valley Conservation Clubs

On January 17, Sen. Patterson spoke to the Belleville Rotary and Huron Valley C.C. on Hunting in Michigan. Ginger Bruder headed up a fine staff who prepared an ample meal from varieties of game, which was enjoyed by all. The Rotary Club donated to the Belleville Library a copy of *Homegrown - Pure and Simple*, a cookbook with recipes for wild game. “Hunting first put Michigan on the map,” declared the seasoned hunter.



Sen. Patterson and Ginger Bruder with ‘*Homegrown – Pure and Simple*,’ after the dinner.
Photo by Sue Trussell.

Senators expand job-growth tax credits to small firms

Small businesses should have more opportunities to seek tax credits under a proposal passed by the Michigan Senate. The legislation would expand the number of businesses that can seek reduced Single Business Tax payments under the Michigan Economic Growth Authority {MEGA}.

Michigan companies could seek tax credits if they expand by 50 jobs, instead of the previous requirement of 75. Out-of-state companies planning to locate in Michigan would be able to get credits if they create 100 jobs, instead of 150.

To fix Michigan's economy, senators want to encourage and expand the state's jobs base. By making these tax credits include more small firms, they're helping promote job growth and the long-term economic success of Michigan. SB 802 now heads to the House of Representatives for consideration.

Senate to provide teachers with tax relief

Legislation designed to provide teachers with tax relief was introduced in the Michigan Senate Tuesday. The legislation would allow teachers to claim a \$100 tax credit on their taxes after they spend a minimum of \$100 on supplies for their school or classroom. Classroom supplies include items such as books for teacher or student use, books on tape, videotapes, computer programs, art supplies, science and lab equipment, tape recorders and headphones. Senate Bill 977 has been referred to the Senate Committee on Finance.

Joint Committee to hear Capacity Needs report

Sen. Patterson and Rep. Mike Nofs will co-chair a special joint meeting of the Senate's Committee on Technology & Energy, and the House's Committee on Energy & Technology, on February 1. They will hear from the MPSC on projections of power needs in Michigan, and the generating capacity to meet those needs. Michigan's needs are projected to match or surpass that capacity by 2009, with no emergency back-up available.

Sen. Patterson has repeatedly raised the issue, which has not caught much continuing attention, despite the great Blackout of August 2003. Michigan has not had a comprehensive long-range energy plan in 30 years. In July, 2005, Patterson held a press conference in the Capitol, and recently announced formation of a workgroup to report to his Senate Committee.

He said, "I was the first one on my feet when the governor mentioned [this issue]... She should come to my Committee and share her thoughts. I'm ready and willing to work with her. This cannot, must not, be a partisan issue. Michigan's future depends on it."

Senate to consider Detroit regional water authority

This week the Senate Committee on Local, Urban, and State Affairs reported legislation that would require the city of Detroit to establish a regional authority to oversee its water system. The legislation is designed to ensure that rates charged for water and sewer service are just and reasonable. The legislation also would require advance notice of rate increases be provided to customers and would allow only one rate increase during any 12-month period. The governor vetoed similar legislation three years ago arguing there were less drastic alternatives to address what she referred to as "the problems that have been identified with the water system." The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department has been plagued by a long history of higher-than inflation rate increases and questionable contracting practices. The Senate is tentatively scheduled to consider SB 372 next week.

Sen. Patterson to host Senate Education Committee in District

On Monday, February 27, Sen. Patterson will host Chairman Wayne Kuipers and the Education Committee at a special public hearing in Brownstown. The subject will be the proposed graduation requirements recently published by Superintendent Mike Flanagan. The meeting will open at 5:30pm. at Brownstown Middle School, 20135 Inkster Road, between Sibley and King Roads. Further notice will be coming.

